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House of Representatives

The House met at 10:30 a.m.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 30 minutes and each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes.

THE PELOSI PREMIUM

The SPEAKER. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'm here to talk about the Pelosi Premium. Once a nightmare scenario, \$4 gasoline may soon become a harsh reality on Speaker PELOSI's watch. Today, drivers are paying a dollar more per gallon at the pump than when the Speaker took office. This Pelosi Premium is hitting working families hard at a time when they are confronting soaring costs, a slowing economy and a housing crunch. Middle-class families and their increasingly tight budgets need relief, not more broken promises. We're operating under a set of broken promises.

Speaker PELOSI promised the American people a commonsense plan to lower gasoline prices, but House Democrats have not only failed to offer any meaningful solutions, they've put forward policies that will have precisely the opposite effect. We cannot tax middle-class families' and truckers' tanks from empty to full.

Speaker NANCY PELOSI on 4-18-2006: The Democrats have a plan to lower gas prices.

Speaker NANCY PELOSI on 4-24-2006: Democrats have a commonsense plan to help bring down skyrocketing gas prices.

August 4, 2007, Democrats have voted those four times to raise taxes in the 110th Congress: January 18, August 4, December 6, 2007, February 27, 2008. The Pelosi Premium continues.

Since Democrats took control of Congress, gasoline prices have skyrocketed by more than \$1 per gallon forcing worker families to pay a Pelosi Premium at the pump. With reports indicating gasoline prices are beginning to hit \$4 per gallon, the Pelosi Premium couldn't come at a worse time for middle-class families already being squeezed by the soaring costs of living.

The price we pay for both gasoline and oil is fundamentally an issue of supply and demand, but while U.S. oil consumption has largely remained the same over the past few years, world oil consumption has spiraled to 84 million barrels a day, up nearly 25 percent from 68 million barrels a decade ago. This results in a tremendous increase in prices.

As you are fully aware, gas prices have increased by \$1.05 per gallon since NANCY PELOSI took control of Congress on January 4, 2007. This represents an increase of nearly 45 percent.

At the same time that world oil consumption has skyrocketed, access to world energy supplies has struggled to keep pace. Nowhere has this trend been worse than in the United States which stands today as the only industrialized Nation in the world that refuses to tap 85 percent of our available deep sea energy resources.

While the U.S. has held its consumption steady, more needs to be done to build a bridge from where we are today to the renewable and alternative energy future in which we all want to live. In fact, under the Democrats in Congress, we've gone from 50 percent of our oil imports coming from OPEC to 57 percent coming from OPEC in 1 year.

But before we achieve those things in the future, we'll have to figure out a way to live, work, and prosper in the present. For too many Democrats, growing our economy today, tomorrow, and next month isn't much of a priority. In fact, the majority has voted four separate times to raise energy taxes in the 110th Congress. But even if we had access to all of the oil in the world, we would need places to turn that oil into gasoline. Regrettably, the U.S. hasn't built a new refinery in 32 years and, in fact, has successfully shut down several at that time. The results are stunning. Today, the U.S. has only 149 operable oil refineries compared with 321 in 1981. That means roughly double the demand now must be handled with half of the number of refineries.

Let's remember this fall the broken promises made in 2006 and the Pelosi Premium which is costing us so much money.

THE PELOSI PREMIUM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ISRAEL). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND) for 5 minutes.

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to read to you, Mr. Speaker, a memo from the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee that was sent out in 2006. This was sent out to the Democratic candidates, and it was obtained by the Chicago Tribune.

"Demonstrate your dedication for fighting for middle-class families by clearly explaining how you will work to keep down the price of gas if elected to Congress. Hold an event at a gas station or other logical locations where you will call for real commitment to bringing down gas prices and pledge that, as a Member of Congress, you will fight for families in your district, not the oil and gas executives for which

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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this Republican Congress has fought so hard.”

Now those are some pretty interesting comments coming from the DCCC. On May 10, 2006, BARON HILL said this: “In Congress, I will support measures that will strengthen our economy and lower gas prices instead of rewarding big oil companies and special interest lobbies.”

Mr. Speaker, once Mr. HILL got elected to Congress and voted to raise taxes on the American energy producers, he was somehow shocked when higher taxes resulted in higher gas prices.

March 12, 2007, in a press release Mr. HILL said, “Gasoline prices have increased significantly over the past few weeks, with little explanation for higher prices.” The explanation for higher prices is because of higher taxes.

Mr. JOE DONNELLY in a July 3, 2006, interview: “I will be an independent voice who will represent the people of the second district. Not the wealthy oil and pharmaceutical companies that have bought our Congress and are running our country. We need leaders who will stand up for good jobs, a better prescription drug plan for our seniors, and a real energy plan that will work to drive down skyrocketing gas prices.”

Mr. DONNELLY, I'm sure your constituents and the people of this country are waiting for that energy to go forth in some results.

April 26, 2006, press release by Mr. ED MARKEY: “Congress once again has an opportunity to help the American people through this financial pinch.” Keep in mind, the Republicans were in charge and the Democrats were trying to win votes, Mr. Speaker.

“But by ignoring legislation like the Windfall Profits and Consumer Assistance Act, Congress has shown, once again, that it would rather put the needs of the special interests ahead of the needs of the American people. There is a cost to this kind of corruption in Washington, and it's at \$75 a barrel and climbing.”

Mr. MARKEY, the price today is \$113 a barrel, and you have not reintroduced your Windfall Profits and Consumer Assistance Act to Congress.

But what have we done? I tell you what we have done. The chairman of Energy and Commerce has got a solution: raise gasoline tax by 50 cents a gallon. I don't think that's what the American people had in mind.

July 26, 2006, in a town hall meeting, JIM CLYBURN, who is now the majority whip, says this: “Thomas from Orangeburg asks: What are you doing about gas prices? They're ridiculously high.” Mr. CLYBURN answered, “House Democrats have a plan to help curb rising gas prices. We have outlined our plan in a proposal called Energizing America. I join my fellow Democrats in believing that drilling for more oil is not a long-term solution to our Nation's energy crisis.”

What is it? Buying bicycles? The Pelosi plan? Thirty bicycles for \$30,000?

Raising taxes? Fifty cents a gallon by the chairman of Energy and Commerce proposal? Five cents a gallon by the chairman of Transportation? A dollar a barrel of oil from the chairman of Transportation? Those are some great ideas.

April 27, 2006, when gas was \$2.91 a gallon, and I will remind you that it's \$3.44 today, a letter to Speaker Hastert signed by 88 Democratic Members of Congress, they said this: “Just this week, the price for oil increased to over \$70 a barrel.” Don't we yearn for those days of \$70 a barrel when it's \$113 today?

We believe Congress has an obligation to determine the underlying causes behind the skyrocketing prices. Congress has an obligation to take action on behalf of the consumer. Where is the action?

All bark, no bite.

GOP: THE GRAND OIL PARTY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Well, the Grand Oil Party is at it again. \$500 billion in profits to the oil industry since George Bush, the oil man, and DICK CHENEY, the oil man, took office. Remember what they told us? They could deal with the industry. They'd talk the prices down. They could deal with OPEC. They'd talk the prices down. OPEC is violating international law. The President won't file a complaint in the World Trade Organization for their illegal constraint of production which is driving up the price. The President refuses to take any action against his friends in the OPEC consortium or cartel.

Now the big oil companies, \$40 billion in profits for one, ExxonMobil, last year, their generous campaign contributors, the GOP, Grand Oil Party, is doing very well. But now they're crying crocodile tears here on the floor and saying they really care about consumers, after the Bush-Cheney energy bill, which gave subsidies to ExxonMobil who made \$40 billion last year after the Republicans refused last year to strip those subsidies from the oil companies? They complain about the high price to consumers. They're born-again consumer advocates. That's great.

I've been a consumer advocate for a long time. I have consistently supported a windfall profits tax. I've also consistently said we've got to go after the OPEC cartel and file the complaints. And we need new technologies, and we need new fuels, and we need conservation. None of those things were in the Bush-Cheney energy bills written behind closed doors by big oil and the GOP, the Grand Oil Party.

But now, their presumptive political nominee, Mr. McCain, has come up with a great idea, let's suspend the gas tax. Now, let's see. In 1993, the gas tax was 18.3 cents a gallon, and gas was

\$1.05 a gallon. Today, in my district, gas is \$3.50 a gallon, and guess what? The Federal gas tax is still 18.3 cents a gallon. That money is a tax. It's a tax going to big oil and OPEC and to hedge fund speculators who are driving up the price of oil. That's the tax the American consumers are paying. They won't take on OPEC, and they sure as heck aren't going to take on their friends in big oil.

We're willing to do that. And suspending the gas tax, now I would ask the presumptive Republican nominee, Mr. McCain, if we suspend the gas tax, how many highway projects and bridge projects are you going to cancel? How many thousand people are you going to put out of work when you already have a deficit in the trust fund? If you want to give relief to the American consumers, target the real culprits. It is not the gas tax that's been flat for the last 15 years; it's big oil and it's the OPEC companies and the hedge fund speculators on Wall Street. Let's go after them.

HOPE AND CHANGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DAVID DAVIS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to tell you something about my district. I go home every single weekend because I take the word “representative” very seriously. I go home and speak with people living and working in my district because they are the ones who sent me to Washington to express their ideas and their concerns. Two common themes come up from the people in northeast Tennessee: hope and change. We hear a lot about those words today.

They hope that sometime in the future they won't have to spend over \$50 to fill up their pick-up truck. They want change, a change that will take them from dependence on foreign oil to clean, safe, and available American energy. Energy is the foundation and lifeblood of the American economy creating the conditions to help us support good-paying jobs here in the United States and allow our industrial base to compete with the rest of the world.

We all know that the middle-class families are feeling significant pain at the pump. But the American family isn't the only place where the strain of spiking fuel prices can be felt. According to recent news reports, local schools, law enforcement agencies, and other community services are paying the price for a record high-fuel cost. Unfortunately, Democrats in the House, who are now in charge, have been consistent in offering so-called energy legislation that weakens our ability to compete with emerging titans such as China, India, and Russia.

In the United States today, we are 63 percent dependent on foreign sources of energy. 63 percent. And that percentage is growing every year. Gasoline